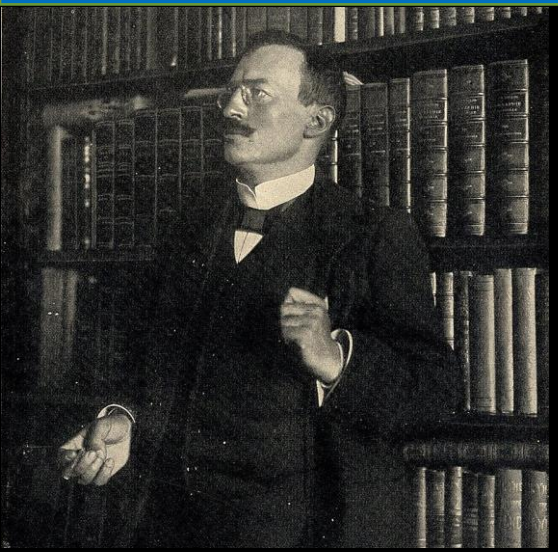
RYSSLAND
Novosibirsk
Irkutsk
Bajkal-sjön
Ulan Bator
MONGOLIET
Peking
Svarta havet
TURKIET
Medelhavet
SYRIEN
Eufrat
Tigris
IRAK
Baku
Kaspiska havet
Aralsjön
Tasjkent
Urumchi
Gobiöknen
Tehran
Bagdad
IRAN
Kashgar
Takla Makan öknen
Lop-Nor
Gula floden
Xian
TIBET
KINA
AFGANISTAN
ARABIEN
Persiska viken
Indus
PAKISTAN
NEPAL
Röda havet
INDIEN
Arabiska havet
Bengaliska viken
0
500
1000 km
1886
1890 – 1891
1893 – 1897
1899 – 1902
1906 – 1908
1916
1927 – 1928
1929 – 1930
1933 – 1935

Sven Hedin



Sven Hedin

Sven Anders Hedin, (19 February 1865 – 26 November 1952) was a Swedish geographer, topographer, explorer, photographer, travel writer and illustrator of his own works. During four expeditions to Central Asia, he made the Transhimalaya known in the West and located sources of the Brahmaputra, Indus and Sutlej Rivers. He also mapped lake Lop Nur, and the remains of cities, grave sites and the Great Wall of China in the deserts of the Tarim Basin. In his book Från pol till pol (From Pole to Pole), Hedin describes a journey through Asia and Europe between the late 1880s and the early 1900s. While traveling, Hedin visited Turkey, the Caucasus, Tehran, Iraq, lands of the Kyrgyz people and the Russian Far East, India, China and Japan. The posthumous publication of his Central Asia Atlas marked the conclusion of his life's work.

First trip to Iran (Persia)

In May 1885, Hedin graduated from Beskowska secondary school in Stockholm. He then accepted an offer to accompany the student Erhard Sandgren as his private tutor to Baku, where Sandgren's father was working as an engineer in the oil fields of Robert Nobel. Afterward he attended a course in topography for general staff officers for one month in summer 1885 and took a few weeks of instruction in portrait drawing; this comprised his entire training in those areas.

Second trip to Iran

On 12 May 1890, he accompanied as interpreter and vice-consul a Swedish legation to Iran which was to present the Shah of Iran with the insignia of the Order of the Seraphim. As part of the Swedish legation, he was at an audience of the shah Naser al-Din Shah Qajar in Tehran. He spoke with him and later accompanied him to the Elburz Mountain Range. On 11 July 1890.

First expedition

Between 1893 and 1897, Hedin investigated the Pamir Mountains, travelling through the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang region, across the Taklamakan Desert, Lake Kara-Koshun and Lake Bosten, proceeding to study northern Tibet. He covered 26,000 kilometres (16,000 mi) on this journey and mapped 10,498 kilometres (6,523 mi) of them on 552 sheets. Approximately 3,600 kilometres (2,200 mi) led through previously uncharted areas.

In January 1896, after a stopover in Kashgar, Hedin visited the 1,500-year-old abandoned cities of Dandan Oilik and Kara Dung, which are located northeast of Khotan in the Taklamakan Desert. At the beginning of March, he discovered Lake Bosten, one of the largest inland bodies of water in Central Asia. He reported that this lake is supplied by a single mighty feeder stream, the Kaidu River. He mapped Lake Kara-Koshun and returned on 27 May to Khotan. On 29 June, he started out from there with his caravan across northern Tibet and China to Beijing, where he arrived on 2 March 1897. He returned to Stockholm via Mongolia and Russia.

Second expedition

Another expedition in Central Asia followed in 1899–1902 through the Tarim Basin, Tibet and Kashmir to Calcutta. Hedin navigated the Yarkand, Tarim and Kaidu rivers and found the dry riverbed of the Kum-darja as well as the dried out lake bed of Lop Nur. Near Lop Nur, he discovered the ruins of the 340 by 310 metres (1,120 by 1,020 ft) former walled royal city and later Chinese garrison town of Loulan, containing the brick building of the Chinese military commander, a stupa, and 19 dwellings built of poplar wood. He also found a wooden wheel from a horse-drawn cart (called an arabas) as well as several hundred documents written on wood, paper and silk in the Kharosthi script.

Third expedition

Between 1905 and 1908, Hedin investigated the Central Iranian desert basins, the western highlands of Tibet and the Transhimalaya, which for a time was afterward called the Hedin Range.

Mongolia

In 1923, Hedin traveled to Beijing via the USA—where he visited the Grand Canyon—and Japan. Because of political and social unrest in China, he had to abandon an expedition to Xinjiang.

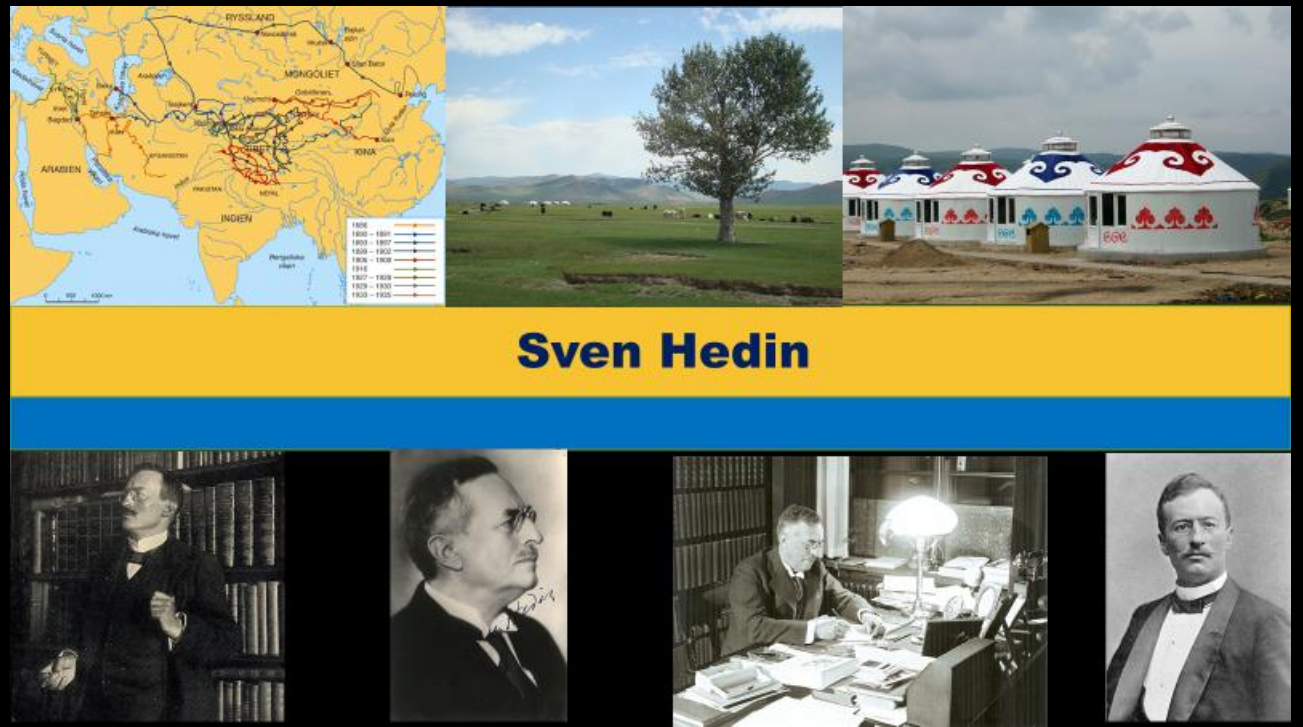
Fourth expedition

Between 1927 and 1935, Hedin led an international Sino-Swedish Expedition which investigated the meteorological, topographic and prehistoric situation in Mongolia, the Gobi Desert and Xinjiang.

At the end of the expedition, Hedin was in a difficult financial situation. He had considerable debts at the German-Asian Bank in Beijing, which he repaid with the royalties and fees received for his books and lectures. In the months after his return, he held 111 lectures in 91 German cities as well as 19 lectures in neighboring countries. To accomplish this lecture tour, he covered a stretch as long as the equator, 23,000 kilometres (14,000 mi) by train and 17,000 kilometres (11,000 mi) by car—in a time period of five months. He met Adolf Hitler in Berlin before his lecture on 14 April 1935.

Hedin and Nazi Germany

Hedin's conservative and pro-German views eventually translated into sympathy for the Third Reich, and this would draw him into increasing controversy towards the end of his life. Adolf Hitler had been an early admirer of Hedin, who was in turn impressed with Hitler's nationalism. He saw the German leader's rise to power as a revival of German fortunes, and welcomed its challenge against Soviet Communism. He was not an entirely uncritical supporter of the Nazis, however. His own views were shaped by traditionalist, Christian and conservative values, while National Socialism was in part a modern revolutionary-populist movement. Hedin objected to some aspects of National Socialist rule, and occasionally attempted to convince the German government to relent in its anti-religious and anti-Semitic campaigns.



Hedin's Gravestone in the cemetery of Adolf Fredriks church in Stockholm, Sweden